



# Fergus County

712 W. Main • Lewistown, MT 59457  
Ph: 406-538-5119 • Fax: 406-538-9023  
email: commissioners@co.fergus.mt.us

SENATE JUDICIARY  
EXHIBIT NO. P. 14  
DATE 2/10/11  
SB 17, 18  
Commissioners:  
Carl Seilstad  
Ken Ronish  
John Jensen

February 9, 2011

Honorable Chair Murphy and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

Fergus County would like to go on the record in strong opposition of SB 17 & 18.

Fergus County commissioners have the ultimate responsibility for the construction, maintenance and repair of the county jail, as well as being responsible for the fiscal soundness and the safety and welfare of those incarcerated in our county jail.

None of these things change with SB's 17 & 18. Commissioners will still bear the full responsibility when things go wrong. These two bills essentially give full autonomy to an elected Sheriff and release them of any accountability, responsibility or liability.

These bills would be incredibly detrimental to all local government relationships. Our county has an open and fully participatory relationship between all elected officials, including the Sheriff. Passage of these bills would significantly damage that cooperative effort.

These bills will increase the cost of doing business at the local level because of the additional level of risk management which would be required to cover the liability of a department that has no oversight and would be functioning free from responsibility to the taxpayers. There is a question as to whether these independent Sheriff's departments would be able to find affordable insurance coverage for the property, liability, automobiles, errors and omissions, etc.

Fergus County would respectfully request that this committee to table SB's 17 & 18 and assist us in working towards restoring the partnership at all levels of Government.

Sincerely,

Carl Seilstad, Chair  
Fergus County Commissioners